

**Remarks by U.S. Ambassador James Zumwalt
at the inauguration of the USAID-refurbished library
at the National Assembly, Dakar**

Wednesday, November 18, 2015

(As prepared)

Honorable President of the National Assembly,
Honorable Minister of Labor, Social Dialogue, Professional Organizations and the
Relationships with the Institutions,
Honorable Members of Parliament (MPs),
The President of the Steering Committee,
Executive Director of ONG 3D,
Members of the Consortium of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs),
Dear Participants,

Good evening.

It is a privilege to represent the United States Government at this official inauguration of the renovated and modernized National Assembly Library. It is also a privilege to visit, for the first time, this august and historic Parliament, and to participate with you, honorable deputies, in this ceremony.

This initiative, to refurbish the Library and protect its collection, builds on the long partnership between the United States and Senegal to strengthen democratic institutions. It is a key part of the USAID's Parliamentary Assistance and Civic Engagement project, or PACE.

As in democracies all over the world, a strong legislature is vital to transparency, responsiveness, and accountability of a government to its citizens. Parliamentarians represent their constituents as they shape legislation and provide oversight of the executive branch.

For over a century, the Assembly in Dakar consistently played a key role in the progress and the democratization of the entire Francophone West African colonies as the seat of the *Grand Conseil de l'Afrique Occidentale Française* (AOF).

In fact, the library today houses a rare trove of AOF archives, such as legislative records, parliamentary proceedings, debates, and passed laws. This rich heritage must be conserved for the benefit of current and future generations.

One goal of PACE is to support the National Assembly in improving the connection between Deputies and their constituents, making it more responsive to the needs of the Senegalese electorate.

For example, the project translated 10 key laws and a glossary of legal concepts into local languages. It facilitated interactive forums between Deputies and their constituents, particularly youth and women. It trained nearly 100 new Deputies in legislative proceedings.

One particularly exciting tool is a video-book, an audio-visual parliamentary guide, which you will see today. The guide is a one-stop comprehensive reference on key roles and responsibilities of the Deputies of Parliament in both French and local languages. I would like to congratulate all those who participated in this project. I would also like to thank the Honorable President of the National Assembly who provided the support necessary to its success.

We hope that this assistance in making your historical records more accessible, especially to new deputies, will further strengthen Senegal's proud legislative tradition.

And that it will help usher in a new era of engagement between legislators and their constituents to the benefit of the whole country.

We look forward to continued partnership in support of vibrant, effective democracy in Senegal.

Thank you for your gracious attention.